

**U.S Participation in the UNESCO Regional Literacy Conference
Bamako, Mali
September 10 – 12, 2007**

A U.S. delegation of representatives from the U.S. Department of State, USAID, and the U.S. Department of Education will travel to Bamako, Mali for the UNESCO Regional Literacy Conference to be held September 10 – 12, 2007. The delegation will join representatives from around Africa as well as senior representatives of UNESCO and other international and regional organizations at the conference, entitled “Renewing Literacy to Face African and International Challenges.” The conference will be hosted by the Government of Mali in conjunction with UNESCO.

The U.S. delegation will include U.S. Ambassador to Mali Terence P. McCulley, U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO Louise Oliver, Department of Education Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education Troy Justesen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Carol Thompson, USAID Director of Education Joe Carney, and USAID Director of Education for Africa Sarah Moten. U.S. First Lady Laura Bush will address the conference by means of a video-taped speech to participants at the conference opening ceremony.

The Bamako Regional Literacy Conference is the third in a series of regional conferences sponsored by UNESCO to build upon the work of the White House Conference on Global Literacy. The First Lady’s White House Conference on Global Literacy was held in New York on September 18, 2006 and was organized jointly by the U.S. Department of State, USAID, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Within the framework of the U.N. Literacy Decade and UNESCO’s Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), the regional conferences address literacy challenges specific to various regions. Organizers gather regional experiences, disseminate effective practices, create cooperation among stakeholders, mobilize partners and resources, and promote literacy. A total of six regional literacy conferences are planned to be held around the world.